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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UP](#)

SUBJECT: SEA BREEZE MILITARY EXERCISE AT RISK

REF: KYIV 00924

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Robert Scott for reasons 1.4(b,d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) The Rada on June 3 again failed to include on its agenda legislation authorizing foreign military personnel to participate in joint training exercises on Ukrainian territory. Although the legislation is necessary for Ukraine to conduct eleven training exercises planned for 2009 with various countries, it is most closely associated with the annual Sea Breeze US-Ukraine bilateral exercise. Sea Breeze is slated for July 13-26, leaving the Rada little time to act and still insure the exercise takes place. Coalition MPs indicate that party leadership is not pushing this issue onto the agenda. End Summary.

COALITION LACKS POLITICAL WILL TO PUSH FORWARD

12. (C) Coalition MPs told us June 3 that there is little effort being made to ensure the passage of the military exercise authorization legislation. Serhiy Vlasenko from Prime Minister Tymoshenko's bloc (BYuT) explained that the bloc is focused on the BYuT/Regions broad coalition talks and is not discussing passage of the military exercise law. Pro-presidential Our Ukraine-People's Self Defense (OU-PSD) bloc MP Lilya Grigoryvna told us the bill will not come up for a vote this week, and if it did it would not pass. The Coalition's effort to push the military exercise legislation is over, according to pro-coalition OU-PSD MP Kyrylo Kulykov. BYuT MP Valeriy Pysarenko explained that it would be politically helpful in the charged environment in the run up to either the presidential election or a reformatting of the coalition to avoid a showdown over legislation so closely associated with NATO.

COMMENT

13. (C) The cancellation of Sea Breeze could have a number of negative knock-on effects beyond the termination of this year's exercise. The government's inability or unwillingness to pass the authorizing legislation undercuts its repeated public statements of support for closer military integration with the West. The comment from Pysarenko in incorrectly describing Sea Breeze as a "NATO" exercise underscores the difficulty this legislation has faced as parties are leery of taking positions which could be used by opponents to cast them as "pro-NATO" in the presidential election run-up. The media has focused on the fate of Sea Breeze since this spring, when formal letters of protest were addressed to the Rada by local leaders in Donetsk and by the Crimean parliament. We expect that attention - and speculation about motivations - will intensify in the wake of any cancellation.

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